

Mr. President, we have already cut that plan to the bare bones. We have used this on other programs to cut and we have done it in the right way. Any fluff that was in that program is gone. Some say we have cut far too much out of it.

The prevention fund is, as we speak, helping States fight chronic illnesses such as heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes. These chronic diseases I have just mentioned are responsible for 7 out of 10 deaths in America today. Imagine, 7 out of 10 deaths are caused from heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes. Yet Republicans want to use this program to pay for the student loan interest rate stabilization—a program that stops these diseases from going forward. It is a preventive program.

These diseases are responsible for three-quarters of the Nation's health care spending. So anything we can do to cut those back is the right thing to do. Common sense indicates we need to be treating those 26 million Americans with diabetes. Around America today there are 26 million people who are taking medicine for diabetes, and it is sad to say that includes a rapidly growing number of children. These 26 million people use up much of our health care delivery system, and diabetes increases the risk of developing other costly, life-threatening, chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke, kidney failure, and many other maladies that come from simply having diabetes.

This prevention fund the Republicans want to use to pay for this stabilization program for student loans also pays for successful tobacco cessation programs that avert billions of health care costs to treat emphysema, heart disease, and cancer, among others. It finances immunizations for preventable childhood illnesses such as measles and whooping cough.

These diseases are back because there have been too few immunizations. Last year, measles reached a 15-year high in our country. After nearly being wiped out in the 1950s, whooping cough has resurfaced. There have been major articles—I read one—that are stunning. As a kid, I received a whooping cough shot. I hadn't heard of it, but it is back. This is a terrible disease that we now have in America. As I say, it has come back. It produces violent coughs that can go on for as much as 6 months. People can die as a result of coughing so hard. There has been a real bad outbreak of whooping cough in California, and the disease in America has reached its highest rate in 50 years. Yet the Republicans want to cut back on these immunizations. That is not a good idea.

These diseases I have talked about are completely preventable with the proper immunizations the prevention fund supports. Yet Republicans want to axe investments in preventive care that save the country money and save lives. We have already made cuts, as I

have indicated, difficult cuts to this program. We cannot afford to make more drastic cuts that would put Americans' health at risk.

While we do not support Republicans' plan to cut programs that combat diabetes, heart disease, or cancer, we are happy if they want a vote on some alternative. But let us get on this bill. Republicans need to stop filibustering our legislation—in this instance, the Stop Student Loan Interest Rate Hike Act. If they want some other way to pay for it, let us take a look at it. Let them offer it. The stakes are too high to let partisanship get in the way.

The average student graduates with \$25,000 in debt. These young people are running up these loans because they want to, because education is so important in our country. But too many young people are putting off buying a house, starting a family, or opening a business because they are saddled with this crushing student loan debt. We don't need to load that burden even more. Democrats are determined to protect millions of students from increasing interest rates—almost 30,000 in Nevada alone.

If Republicans truly share our goal, they will vote to advance this legislation today.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

ELECTION YEAR LEGISLATION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, it is not exactly a State secret that Senate Democrats have turned the floor into an extension of the Obama campaign over the past few months, and that what happens here these days has a lot more to do with what some political consultant out in Chicago thinks is good for the President's reelection than what the American people think would be good for the country as a whole.

Separation of powers notwithstanding, the Democrats' top message man recently admitted Senate Democrats and the White House are "attached at the hip," meaning, of course, the Senate has ceased to be a place where problems are resolved and has become instead a place where Democrats produce campaign material.

Today's vote on student loan rates is a perfect example of this cynical election year strategy in action. Rather than working with Republicans to help young people in this country weather the effects of the Obama economy, Democrats have sought to distract them from it. Never mind the fact that Democratic leaders supported the bill that will cause interest rates on certain college loans to spike on July 1. Never mind the fact that President Obama was so concerned about this issue when this legislation passed he

didn't even show up for the vote. Never mind the fact that Democrats have known this problem was coming for literally years but deliberately waited until 2 months before their temporary fix was due to expire to do anything about it.

Never mind any of that. What matters now for Democrats is they find a way to drive a wedge between Republicans and a constituency they are looking to court ahead of the November elections. That is what today's vote is all about for them.

For Republicans, well, we don't think young people should have to suffer any more than they already are as a result of this President's failure to turn the economy around. We just disagree we should pay for a fix by diverting \$6 billion from Medicare and raising taxes on the very businesses we are counting on to hire these young people.

But as I said, solving the problem isn't what this is about for Senate Democrats and the White House they are coordinating with. Finding a solution to this problem actually isn't difficult at all. What is difficult is getting Democrats to agree to it in an election year. For them, it is about putting the other party on the spot.

Look, Republicans have a solution to this problem. We have asked for a vote on it. Even Senator HARKIN, who opposes our approach, thinks we should at least get that vote. But following the President's lead, Senate Democratic leaders have decided to put the finger of blame instead on us instead of solving the problem—which, of course, is completely ridiculous.

Here we are nearly 3½ years into this President's first term, and he is still blaming his predecessor. He got nearly everything he wanted for 2 years. He borrowed and spent trillions. He took over the student loan industry. He took over health care. He imposed his regulations. It is his economy now. Yet he is still blaming others.

My view is, if you are going to ask the American people to take responsibility for their actions, pay their fair share, and play by the rules, it is time the President led by example and did the same.

Three months ago, the President told the American people that it is time to apply the same rules from top to bottom. The President said: No bailouts, no handouts, and no cop-out. An America built to last, he said, insists on responsibility from everybody. Yet day after day, week after week, what do we get from Democratic leaders in the Senate and from the President himself but more cop-outs.

Here is the real issue behind today's votes. Right now, more than half of college graduates cannot find a decent job. Close to half of them are back at home living with their parents. As a Wall Street Journal article from late last year put it: The U.S. labor market may be in a malaise, but young adults are in a crisis.

The real solution, of course: progrowth policies that make it easier